

ZEV WILLIAM WOLFSON

44 WHITEHALL STREET

NEW YORK 4, N. Y.

DIGBY 4-5210

November 22, 1963

Dear Norman:

I have received your corrected draft, for which I thank you. I have also returned your call, but you were not in.

I should like to clarify that I did not send the rough draft to you, part of which I did not even read before it was sent to you, for correction, but rather, to help Moe and myself with whatever ideas you might be able to contribute.

I do realize that you are very preoccupied and I have resolved, therefore, not to impose upon you with these letters, however important they might be, unless you specifically express a desire to be of assistance.

A good Shabos.

Sincerely yours,



ZWW/mm

Rabbi Norman Lamm  
The Jewish Center  
131 West 86th Street  
New York 24, New York

I will be inviting you & your wife soon for a meal in my house.

The facts mentioned above completely refute the standard answers on the Jewish question the Soviet leaders usually give when inquiries are made <sup>on</sup> about the subject.

Wolfson



*Feld  
Wulfson*

The Honorable John F. Kennedy  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

As one who has a large constituency of citizens of the Jewish faith, I have become keenly aware of their distress at the unendurable anguish of Russian Jewry. As the President of the country which contains the largest population of Jews in the world today, and in view of the new orientation in Soviet-American relationships, you are the only person in the world today who can effectively broach this topic to Mr. Krushchev, in a manner which will assure you an unique place in history. Parenthetically, I hear that your comment about the closing of synagogues, in your recent address at the U. N., evoked much enthusiasm amongst American Jews.

Soviet Jewry, numbering some three million, is next to American Jewry the largest Jewish community in the world. It is being crushed by an official policy of attrition which seeks gradually to pulverize and ultimately to eliminate Jewish identity. Yet, despite all the hardships, there are large masses of Soviet Jews who profoundly desire to maintain their Jewish identity. It is tragic, from a purely human point of view, that the Soviet Union has prevented the reunion of many thousands of its Jewish citizens with their families, broken up during the Nazi holocaust and who have relations abroad. Most of these live in the U.S.A. - - more than half of American Jews originally came from Russia - - and Israel. Ironically, the USSR has, in principle, accepted the legitimacy of this right. This isolation of Soviet Jews is a particularly grievous blow to the Jewish people.

The Soviet campaign against "economic crimes" has been directed against a disproportionately large number of Soviets with Jewish names - - and often the religious affiliations and ethnic origins of the accused are made abundantly clear. A little over 1% of the population has thus been held responsible for nearly two-thirds - - in some areas, 100% - - of the economic crimes, for which the punishment is one of barbaric severity; the death sentence.

Judiasm, unlike other religions, is subjected to special discriminations. It is permitted no publications facilities; no Hebrew Bible or Russian translation thereof has been published since 1917; there is an unprecedented shortage of prayer books and religious articles. The lone rabbinical seminary in Moscow is virtually an empty shell with only two students. For two years now, a total ban has been imposed on the public baking and sale of "Matzah", indispensable to the observation of



President of the United States

Page Two

Passover. Jail sentences have been meted out to those who have baked "Matzah". Lay leaders of the Moscow and Leningrad synagogues have been imprisoned on trumped-up charges of espionage. The sacred Jewish practice, burial in consecrated ground, has only recently been prohibited to the Jewish communities of Moscow and Minsk. An insidious press campaign has consistently portrayed Judaism as subversive.

These facts completely refute the standard answers wherewith Soviet diplomats attempt to dismiss the charge of persecution of Jews. The Soviet Jews are neither accepted in Soviet society, nor permitted to live a full Jewish life, nor allowed to emigrate. Their religious rights, civil rights, and elementary human rights have been denied to them.

As American citizens, we owe it both to our consciences and our constituencies to respond to the blowing sentiment of protest and indignation by American Jews to intercede with the Soviet authorities on behalf of Russian Jewry. Your present contacts with Mr. Krushchev may provide you with a historic opportunity to alleviate the misery of the Jews in Russia.

Very truly yours,